Numb. 183

The TATLER.

By *Iſaac Bickerſtaff* Eſq;

——*Fuit hæc Sapientia quondam*
Publica Privatis ſecernere—— Hor.

From *Thurſday June* 8. to *Saturday June* 10. 1710.

From my own Apartment, June 9.

WHEN Men look into their own Boſoms, and conſider the generous Seeds which are there planted, that might, if rightly cultivated, ennoble their Lives, and make their Virtue venerable to Futurity, How can they, without Tears, reflect on the univerſal Degeneracy from that publick Spirit which ought to be the firſt and principal Motive of all their Actions? In the *Grecian* and *Roman* Nations they were wiſe enough to keep up this great Incentive, and it was impoſſible to be in the Faſhion without being a Patriot. All Gallantry had its firſt Source from hence, and to want a Warmth for the publick Welfare was a Defect ſo ſcandalous, that he who was guilty of it, had no Pretence to Honour or Manhood. What makes the Depravity among us in this Behalf the more vexatious and irkſome to reflect upon, is, that the Contempt of Life is carried as far amongſt us, as it could be in thoſe memorable People, and we want only a proper Application of the Qualities which are frequent among us, to be as worthy as they. There is hardly a Man to be found, who will not fight upon any Occaſion which he thinks may taint his own Honour. Were this Motive as ſtrong in every Thing that regards the Publick, as it is in this our private Caſe, no Man would paſs Life away, without having diſtinguiſhed himſelf by ſome gallant Inſtance of his Zeal towards it in the reſpective Incidents of his Life and Profeſſion. But it is ſo far otherwiſe, that there cannot at preſent be a more ridiculous Animal than one who ſeems to regard the Good of others. He in Civil Life, whoſe Thoughts turn upon Schemes which may be of general Benefit, without further Reflexion, is called a Projector; and the Man whoſe Mind ſeems intent upon glorious Atchievements, a Knight Errant. The Ridicule among us runs ſtrong againſt laudable Actions; nay, in the ordinary Courſe of Things, and the common Regards of Life, Negligence of the Publick is an Epidemick Vice. The Brewer in his Exciſe, the Merchant in his Cuſtoms, and for ought we know, the Soldier in his Muſter-Rolls, think never the worſe of themſelves for being guilty of their reſpective Frauds towards the Publick. This Evil is come to ſuch a fantaſtical Height, that he is a Man of a Publick Spirit, and Heroically affected to his Country, who can go ſo far, as even to turn Uſurer with all he has in her Funds. There is not a Citizen in whoſe Imagination ſuch a one does not appear in the ſame Light of Glory, as *Cædrus*, *Scævola*, or any other great Name in Old *Rome*. Were it not for the Heroes of ſo much *per Cent.* as have Regard enough for themſelves and their Nation to trade with her with their Wealth, the very Notion of publick Love would long e're now have vaniſhed from among us. But however general Cuſtom may hurry us away in the Stream of a common Error, there is no Evil, no Crime ſo great, as that of being cold in Matters which relate to the common Good. This is in nothing more conſpicuous, than in a certain Willingneſs to receive any Thing that tends to the Diminution of ſuch as have been conſpicuous Inſtruments in our Service. Such Inclinations proceed from the moſt low and vile Corruption of which the Soul of Man is capable. This effaces not only the Practice, but the very Approbation, of Honour and Virtue, and has had ſuch an Effect, that, to ſpeak freely, the very Senſe of publick Good has no longer a Part even in our Converſations. Can then the moſt generous Motive of Life, the Good of others, be ſo eaſily baniſhed the Breaſt of Man? Is it poſſible to draw all our Paſſions inward? Shall the boiling Heat of Youth be ſunk in Pleaſures, the Ambition of Manhood in ſelfiſh Intrigues? Shall all that is glorious, all that is worth the Purſuit of great Minds, be ſo eaſily rooted out? When the univerſal Bent of a People ſeems diverted from the Senſe of their common Good, and common Glory, it looks like a Fatality, and Criſis of impending Misfortune.

The generous Nations we juſt now mentioned underſtood this ſo very well, that there was hardly an Oration ever made which did not turn upon this general Senſe, That the Love of their Country was the firſt and moſt eſſential Quality in an honeſt Mind. *Demoſthenes*, in a Cauſe wherein his Fame, Reputation, and Fortune, were embarked, puts his

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All upon this Iſſue; *Let the Athenians*, ſay he, *be benevolent to me, as they think I have been zealous for them.* This great and diſcerning Orator knew, there was nothing elſe in Nature could bear him up againſt his Adverſaries, but this one Quality of having ſhown himſelf willing or able to ſerve his Country. This, certainly, is the Teſt of Merit; and the firſt Foundation for deſerving good Will, is having it your ſelf. The Adverſary of this Orator at that Time was *Æſchines*, a Man of wily Arts and Skill in the World, who could, as Occaſion ſerved, fall in with a national Start of Paſſion, or Sullenneſs of Humour (which a whole Nation is ſometimes taken with as well as a private Man) and by that Means divert them from their common Senſe into an Averſion for receiving any Thing in its true Light. But when *Demoſthenes* had awaked his Audience with that one Hint of judging by the general Tenor of his Life towards them, his Services bore down his Opponent before him, who fled to the Covert of his mean Arts, till ſome more favourable Occaſion ſhould offer againſt the ſuperior Merit of *Demoſthenes*.

It were to be wiſhed, that Love of their Country were the firſt Principle of Action in Men of Buſineſs, even for their own Sakes; for when the World begins to examine into their Conduct, the Generality, who have no Share in, or Hopes of, any Part in Power or Riches, but what is the Effect of their own Labour or Property, will judge of them by no other Method than that of how profitable their Adminiſtration has been to the Whole. They who are out of the Influence of Men's Fortune or Favour, will let them ſtand or fall by this one only Rule: And Men who can bear being try'd by it, are always popular in their Fall; thoſe who cannot ſuffer ſuch a Scrutiny, contemptible in their Advancement.

But I am here running into Shreds of Maxims from reading *Tacitus* this Morning, which has driven me from my Recommendation of Publick Spirit, which was the intended Purpoſe of this Lucubration. There is not a more glorious Inſtance of it than in the Character of *Regulus*. This ſame *Regulus* was taken Priſoner by the *Carthaginians*, and ſent by them to *Rome*, in order to demand ſome *Punick* Noblemen who were Priſoners, in Exchange for himſelf, and was bound by an Oath, That he would return to *Carthage* if he failed in his Commiſſion. He propoſes this to the Senate, who were in Suſpence upon it; which *Regulus* obſerving, (without having the leaſt Notion of putting the Care of his own Life in Competition with the Publick Good) deſired them to conſider, That he was old, and almoſt uſeleſs; That thoſe demanded in Exchange were Men of daring Tempers, and great Merit in military Affairs, and wondered they would make any Doubt of permitting him to go back to the ſhort Tortures prepared for him at *Carthage*, where he ſhould have the Advantage of ending a long Life both gloriouſly and uſefully. This generous Advice was conſented to, and he took his Leave of his Country, and his weeping Friends, to go to certain Death, with that chearful Compoſure, as a Man, after the Fatigue of Buſineſs in a Court or a City, retires to the next Village for the Air.

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